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INFO RUEAHLC/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHDC

UNCLAS PORT OF SPAIN 000189

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE
DEPT FOR WHA/CAR, S/CT
PLEASE PASS TO HILLARY BATJER JOHNSON AND PAUL SCHULTZ

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KVPR PER PREL PGOV CVIS ASEC KHLS TD
SUBJECT: PRACTICES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO ON
INFORMTION COLLECTING, SCREENING AND SHARING

REFTEL: (A) STATE 32287
(B) 07 PORT OF SPAIN 1099

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED; PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

¶1. (SBU) This cable responds to questions in ref A.

Watch Listing

¶2. (SBU) The Government of Trinidad and Tobago (GOTT) maintains both an alert list of individuals who should be immediately detained upon entry and a watch list of people whose entry into Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) is made known to appropriate agencies for monitoring of movements. The number of names on this list continues to be high, yet no effort has been made to cull the list. The watch list and alert list are maintained by the Ministry of National Security.

Traveler Information Collection

¶3. (SBU) The GOTT collects information from travelers arriving in T&T based on regulations in the Immigration Act. The GOTT utilizes the INTERPOL computerized database to track entries and exits. The travel documents of passengers arriving by air and sea, including passengers and crew of yachts and similar craft, are examined in the same manner by immigration officials. Although policies are the same for arrivals by air and sea, a slight difference in regulations calls for more intensive monitoring of maritime arrivals, although this is not always practiced; one difficulty is that immigration officials monitoring maritime arrivals are generally presented with a paper list of names of passengers and crew and their nationality and passport information, making rapid screening difficult.

¶4. (SBU) The GOTT may share information on individual travelers with foreign governments on a case-by-case basis if requested; there is no formal policy authorizing this, and information is not shared on a routine basis. During the Cricket World Cup in 2007, various Caribbean nations cooperated on sharing data. This led to the GOTT enacting the Advanced Passenger Information Act of 2008, which fostered sharing during the 2009 Fifth Summit of Americas (SOA). Perhaps as a result, GOTT law enforcement authorities detained several potential protesters upon arrival to T&T. The GOTT collects passenger name record (PNR) data on incoming commercial flights or vessels, but this is sometimes in hard copy only. U.S. Customs continues to work with T&T Customs and Excise officials to automate passenger lists and enter and retrieve them electronically. PNR data is available to systematically screen travelers for intelligence or law enforcement purposes, but in practice arrivals by sea are more difficult to screen. The GOTT does not have any existing treaties to share PNR data.

Border Control and Screening

¶5. (SBU) The GOTT employs software that has certain algorithms to

screen travelers of security interest, but daily use is not guaranteed. All travelers, both T&T citizens and other nationals, are recorded and tracked. There is no data available on the frequency with which travelers are admitted with ostensibly bona fide documents that are not electronically recorded. Unrecorded entries and exits by persons arriving from and departing for Venezuela at locations other than official ports of entry continue to occur at a substantial rate; the number of such entries and exits may be between five and ten percent of all entries and exits.

¶6. (SBU) There is legislation that authorizes border control officials to use other criminal data when deciding who can enter the country. Individuals attempting to enter without valid documents are referred by the Immigration Division in the Ministry of National Security to the Special Branch Police, who detain them until they can be sent back to the country from which they arrived. Occasionally, individuals are sent back without being questioned on the provenance of their false documents. Government policies on questioning, detaining and denying entry to individuals presenting themselves at a point of entry follow regulations in the Immigration Act. The GOTT also refers to International Conventions to which it is a signatory. Information sharing within and among GOTT agencies continues to be sporadic, irregular, and not adequate for making rapid decisions or taking quick action. Communication has improved, especially with the Fifth Summit of Americas, but sustaining this advance will be difficult.

Biometric Collection

¶7. (SBU) The only biometric data collection in the GOTT border control system continues to be facial recognition capability installed by the Canadian Banknote company. Areas of installation

remain limited. Immigration Division officials are not legally authorized to take or collect fingerprints.

Passports

¶8. (SBU) The GOTT began issuing machine readable passports in 2007. These passports include facial recognition features that are still not being utilized. The GOTT does not share the public key to read data with other governments. However, the system in place can read biometric data from other countries, provided they have made the key available. The GOTT issues a standard passport with the normal five-year validity to replace a stolen or lost passport. There are no standard procedures in place for bearers who frequently report their passports lost or stolen. However, each application to replace a stolen passport must be accompanied by a police report. The newer machine readable passports are not as likely to be reported lost or stolen. There is an emergency passport that has a white cover (the regular passport is dark blue) and its own series of serial numbers.

Fraud Detection

¶9. (SBU) There is a fraud unit within the police that investigates various instances of fraud, including the use of fraudulent documents. In addition, as part of a training program conducted by the International Office of Migration (IOM), immigration officers are being issued hand-held scanners, loupes, and combination loupes and infrared and black light devices with which to examine passports. The GOTT subscribes to the Edison database, which provides examples of all passports in the world and their identifying features. In 2008, the GOTT in collaboration with the IOM and the USG, opened the Trinidad and Tobago Immigration Document Examination Laboratory (TTIDEL). GOTT law enforcement officials use the laboratory to determine personal identity and document validity.

As it is the only laboratory of its kind in the region, the GOTT has shared gathered information with neighboring countries on a case-by-case basis.

Privacy and Data Security

¶10. (SBU) The immigration and database system currently in use

reportedly contains information on previous deportations. Records related to questioning, detention and removal of individuals are kept on file indefinitely, usually in locked filing cabinets. Some effort is being made to keep this information electronically as well. The collection and use of sensitive data is restricted by privacy laws; however, data is shared among GOTT entities as required. Post is not aware of any requirement to provide notice to the public concerning the implementation of new databases; post is also unaware of laws relating to security features for government computer systems that hold personally identifying information. The Freedom of Information Act would allow an individual to request access to data, either raw data or case file data that domestic security agencies hold about them; however, there are some prescribed exceptions to the type of data that must be made available. A non-citizen does not have the right to sue the GOTT to obtain data held by a government security agency about them.

Identifying Appropriate Partners

¶11. (SBU) Concern over breaching its citizen's privacy might make some in the GOTT hesitant to enter into a formal data-sharing agreement with the USG. Although the GOTT's legal system is sufficiently developed to adequately provide safeguards for the protection and non-disclosure of information, corruption at the working level exists. The Ministry of National Security maintains a consolidated database and nominally shares this information with other agencies. The GOTT defines terrorism in the Terrorism Act of 2005 broadly as any act inside or outside of Trinidad and Tobago that is prejudicial to national security or disruptive of public safety. It is punishable by up to 25 years of imprisonment.

KUSNITZ